**PHIL682: Figures in Early Modern Philosophy: Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature***

Prof. Ted Kinnaman

Spring 2023

Office: Horizon 6256 Office phone: 703-993-1289

Office hours: Weds., 1:00 – 2:00\*; Thurs., 11:00 – 12:00 Email: tkinnama@gmu.edu

(\*Wednesday office hours are on Zoom. The

link for these is posted on Blackboard.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION: In this course we will study David Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature*. Here Hume attempts to construct a *system* of philosophical thought, meaning a coherent and unified account of the major issues in philosophy. Examination of the *Treatise*, then, lets us look at a wide variety of philosophical topics from a single standpoint, and in connection to one another. The unifying theme in our discussion will be the question of *normativity*: In what way does Hume take his arguments to *justify* beliefs or actions? What implications do different answers to this question have for Hume’s theory of knowledge? In reading Book I of the *Treatise*, we will consider the Hume’s views about causation, knowledge, and the existence of the external world, as well as his overall conception of philosophy. In reading Book II, we will discuss his moral psychology and its connections to the philosophy of the emotions; his compatibilism and the debate about free will; and the account of moral responsibility. Finally, Book III will bring us to his account of moral judgment.

GRADES:

50% of your grade for the course will be determined by a research paper, approx. 15 - 20 pp. This should be on a topic of your choosing relating to the interpretation or evaluation of the *Treatise of Human Nature*. Your topic needs to be approved by me. A rough draft of the paper is due in class on Thurs., May 4.

25%: Paper on Book One, Part 3, about 2000 words. The assignment for this paper is available on Blackboard, under Assessments.

25%: three short (2-3 pp.) papers on the week’s reading. The topic for each paper will be posted on Blackboard in the week before the class meets.

REQUIRED BOOK: Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford University Press, 1978).

RECOMMENDED BOOK: Annette Baier’s *A Progress of Sentiments* (Harvard University Press, 1991). This is available in its entirety through Blackboard. Additional readings will be placed on electronic reserve on Blackboard.

READING SCHEDULE:

Jan. 26: Introduction to course; Hume’s system. Reading: *Treatise*, Introduction (pp. xiii - xix); Quine, “Epistemology Naturalized” and “Natural Kinds.”

Feb. 2: The “Theory of Ideas”; Reading: Book 1, Part 1 (pp. 1 - 25); Reid, “Reflections on the Common Theory of Ideas”; Stroud, “The Theory of Ideas”; Fodor, “Im” and “Simple Concepts.”

Feb. 9: Knowledge and causation (I). Reading: 1.3 (pp. 69 - 179).

Feb. 16: Knowledge and causation (II). Reading: Strawson (pp. 7 - 31 and 145 - 73).

Feb. 23\*: Knowledge and causation (III). Reading: Baier, “Necessity, Nature, Norms”; Boehm, “Normativity of Experience and Causal Belief.”

\*I will be away the week of 2/23, so we’ll need to find a time to hold this meeting via Zoom.

Mar. 2: The mind. 1.4.5-6 (pp. 235 - 63) and Appendix (pp. 633 - 6); Rorty, “Pride Produces the Idea of Self.”

Mar. 9: External bodies. Reading: 1.3.2 (pp. 187 - 218). **[Causation paper due Fri., Mar 10 at 1:00 p.m. in Blackboard. There is no short essay assignment for this week.]**

Mar. 23: Passions. Reading: 2.1.1-6 (pp. 275 ‑ 94); 2.2.1-3 (pp. 329 ‑ 51); Davidson, “Hume’s Cognitive Theory of Pride.”

Mar. 30: Character and moral assessment. Reading: 2.3.1-2 (pp. 399 ‑ 418); Baier, “The Direction of our Conduct”; Cohon, “On an Unorthodox Account of Hume’s Moral Psychology.”

Apr. 6: Reason as “slave of the passions.” Reading: 2.3.3 (pp. 413 - 8); Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism* [excerpts]; Smith, “The Humean Theory of Motivation.” **[By this point you ought to have met with me regarding your research paper.]**

Apr. 13: The naturalistic fallacy. Reading: 3.1.1-2 (pp. 455 - 70); MacIntyre, “Hume on ‘Is’ and ‘Ought’”; Nielsen, “On Deriving an Ought from an Is.”

Apr. 20: Moral objectivity. Reading: 3.3 (pp. 574 ‑ 622); Korsgaard, “The General Point of View”; Bricke, “Moral Sentiments.”

Apr. 27: Justice. Reading: 3.2.1-2 (pp. 477 – 501); Darwall, “Hume: Norms and the Obligation to be Just.”

May 4: Religion. Reading: Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (on Blackboard). **[Draft of research paper due]**

The final version of your RESEARCH PAPER is due by 1:00 p.m. on Friday, May 12.

LATE SUBMISSIONS: I am usually generous about accepting assignments a bit after the due date *if* the student has cleared this with me before hand. If however you hand in an assignment late without talking to me first, you should count on being penalized in some way. If the paper is only slightly late, I may mark it down a grade; if it is very late, I will not accept it at all.

A NOTE ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: The lack of academic integrity is what is common­ly referred to as ‘cheating’. I take cheating to consist in presenting work as your own which was actually written by someone else whether another student or a professional philosopher. A general rule of thumb is, if you say something in a paper that you would not have said if you had not read Smith, even if you do not quote Smith word for word, then you need to footnote Smith. Anyone who cites or otherwise refers to the work of someone else *without acknowledging this fact in a footnote* will be referred to the Honor Committee.